

THE
BELONGING
PROJECT *individual migrants*
interviews & portraits

What is the Belonging Project?
Video Transcript

Dure Nadav

My name is Dure. I'm 37 years old and I'm from Karachi, Pakistan.

Aleksandra Łojek

My name is Aleksandra Łojek.

Aruna

Hello, my name is Aruna.

Aleksandra

I'm 40...almost 41 years old.

Aruna

I'm originally from a small country called Guinea Bissau.

Kamil Kedra

Hello my name is Kamil Kedra. I come from Poland.

Assunção Gonsalves

My name is Assunção Gonsalves. I am from a small country, we call it East Timor.

Laurence Gibson

The Belonging Project is a series of portrait photographs and audio interviews of individual migrants. The portraits include a key, uh, object, a memento that reminds, uh, the person of home. They've chosen the object and brought it with them to the portrait session. I believe the portraits will provide increased understanding of these individual, ah, persons moving into the country and that the public will realise that these people are adding to our culture not taking away from it.

Sophie

So my name is Sophie. I'm from France, and I, um, came across the project through the Belfast Migrant Centre [now Migrant Centre NI], so I took part in the project in July 2013.

Max Petrushkin

Well the role of the Belfast Migrant Centre [now Migrant Centre NI] is to, uh, provide practical assistances and support to migrant workers and ethnic minorities that are both new to these shores and the ones that have been settled here for quite some time.

Laurence

The idea is to represent people as individuals. Migrants are not a cohesive group. They, ah, they are individuals with distinct personalities, distinct cultures, distinct religions. In the interview we ask various questions that the general public, I certainly imagine myself, asking in the street. Where does this person come from, why did they choose to come to Northern Ireland. Often they haven't, or haven't chosen, or it could've been that there was a family member already working here and other questions, such as what was your occupation in your country of origin.

Sophie

I like the idea of the, um, memento because it kind of makes you think. It's something that you wouldn't do consciously. It makes you think about, if your house was on fire, what is the, the object that you would take with you. Or I mean the objects are just superficial, they are just objects but they obviously mean something to people so I think it's quite interesting to think about it, try to find out what is your memento because I was not sure, I was not conscious about it, what was mine, you know.

Max

Belfast Migrant Centre [now Migrant Centre NI], uh, clearly believes that participation in projects like the Belonging Project is very important because it gives people the opportunity to demonstrate their own cultural identity a little bit better, uh, thus giving opportunity for people to integrate better and to show perhaps their vulnerability.

Sophie

I think it tells a lot obviously those are just simple objects that people would bring that would not have meaning for anyone else. But, um, it's very interesting to see the things that people would bring with them, and what it tells about, about us as, as citizen of other countries and as citizens of Northern Ireland — and what's meaningful for other people.

Laurence

I'm hoping that the, the discovery of the portraits, it will change public opinion. Ah, so that people are not scared about people moving into the country. But are excited about these new cultures.

Max

Because at the end of the day, we're all human beings, lonely throughout vulnerabilities. And in your cultural identities we can maybe start to understand

each other. And at least for the conversation to start taking place so I do think it's very important. And we believe it's very important.

Sophie

I would very much recommend this project because it also breaks stereotypes I think.

Laurence

The project's been fantastic because personally it has provided me an amazing insight into these peoples' stories.

Sophie

What people think of who foreigners are, and then what, kind of, defines them or what kind of characteristics they have.

Laurence

And it's a real privilege to be able to display these, and transmit these stories to the general public.

Sophie

It's a great project. Yes I recommend.

// Overlapping voices of migrant stories //

Video created by Nick Worpole. All still photography ©Laurence Gibson